

National Arson Awareness Week

May 1-7, 2005

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) announces the 2005 Arson Awareness Week theme: **"School Arson – A Burning Subject."**

The goal this year is to focus the public's attention on the arson problem in schools. Note that 61 percent of school structure fires are caused by arson, and 70 percent of high school fires are caused by arson. Fatalities from school fires are rare, but the injuries caused by these fires are higher than those of all non-residential structure fires. Arson robs communities of its valuable assets – lives and property.

Although the core group of partners is relatively small, the number of organizations joining the fight against arson in schools is growing. Combining efforts are the Oregon State Fire Marshal, IAAI, USFA, the International Association of Black Professional Fire Fighters, the National Association of Hispanic Firefighters, Fire Proof Children, and SOS Fires. With each new partner, the fight against school arsons gains strength and momentum.

Community involvement is critical.

Getting stories into the media about school fires in your community can help fight this problem in a number of ways. Because these types of stories involve children, they have strong media appeal. Stories can increase public awareness of the issues surrounding the causes of school arson fires. Through such stories, parents and educators can learn about good resources that are available to help them with troubled children.

Join the fight – help a child!

The goals of this year's Arson Awareness Week are to make communities aware of the school arson problem, and to engage citizens in joining the fight. Help the children in your communities by organizing effective arson-awareness activities during this year's Arson Awareness Week.

Examples of National Arson Awareness Week Activities

The following activities can be used by all communities to kick off Arson Awareness Week.

- The mayor and/or city council can issue an Arson Awareness Week Proclamation. (A sample proclamation is attached, or one can be developed that focuses on an individual community's needs.)
- Where appropriate, local fire and police departments jointly can release information on school fire statistics, and ask for the community's help in educating parents and children about the consequences of fire setting/arson. The joint, local effort can be launched via a press conference, a call-in talk (radio or TV) show, or any other highly visible event that attracts good media coverage. Public events and trade show have been great places to get this message out to the community.
- Letters to the editor or editorials to local newspapers are encouraged, since most newspapers actively "letters to the editor." This is one of the most popular ways of getting the message read. Don't forget "Dear Abby" or similar columns that are throughout the country.
- With this year's theme "School Fires – A Burning Subject," enlisting the help of local Shriners Organizations can be a great opportunity. Shriners deal with children that are burn victims, as well as the International Association of Black Professional Firefighters, Women in the Fire Service, National Association of State Fire Marshals, National Association of Hispanic Firefighters and youth mentoring groups to help promote awareness of the perils of fire and the catastrophic result on human lives. Consider having a fire-arson victim serve as a spokesperson. First-hand information is very emotional and powerful.
- Plan informational presentations during Arson Awareness Week at local schools.
- Enlist the help of other organizations to help distribute materials and promote awareness. Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and faith-based organizations who share responsibility, interest and knowledge about arson issues are readily recognized resources in most communities.

Sample Proclamation Request Letter
[Print on organizational letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable [first and last name]
Governor of [insert name of state]
State Capitol
City, State, Zip

Dear Governor [insert last name]:

On behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), I am requesting your support in proclaiming May 1-7, 2005 as "Arson Awareness Week" in your state.

In 2002, 37 percent of all school structure fires and 52 percent of middle and high school structure fires were determined incendiary or suspicious in nature.

Fatalities from school fires are rare, yet on the average, the injuries caused by these fires are higher than those of all non-residential structure fires. Arson fires can rob communities of valuable assets – lives and property.

The theme of this year's Arson Awareness Week is "School Fires – A Burning Subject." Please join the many other states already proclaiming May 1-7, 2005, as "Arson Awareness Week."

Should you have any questions regarding this endeavor, please contact me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx at (000) 000-0000 or Vincent M. Lewis, USFA Liaison, at (301) 447-1272.

Respectfully yours,

[Your name, title and address]

DRAFT

School-Fire Facts

The leading cause of school structure fires on average is incendiary/suspicious activity, which includes arson fires, and accounts for 37 percent of all school structure fires and 52 percent of middle and high school structure fires.

Seventy-eight percent of school fires occur during the school week and 22 percent on weekends. Fifty-five percent of fires occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., the hours students are most likely to be in school.

Fatalities from school fires are rare, but injuries per fire were higher in school structure fires than non-residential structure fires on average. Although most fires occur outdoors, fatal fires occur most frequently in structures. In 2002, outdoor fires accounted for 40 percent of all fires but only 3 percent of fatal fires.

The leading cause of fires that resulted in fatalities was arson (27%), followed by smoking (18%). Fatal fires occur between 1 a.m. and 4 a.m.

January has the most fatal fires with 14 percent of the annual total; December is second at 11 percent, and February third at 10 percent.

Thirty-five percent of those killed in fires were asleep at the time of injury. Twenty-five percent died trying to escape from the fire. When a human factor contributed to a fatality, possible impairment (i.e., alcohol) accounted for 14 percent and physically disabled 12 percent.

Nationally, fires caused over \$84 million damage to educational structures in 1998.

Only a small percentage of school fire incidents are reported to fire departments each year. Incomplete fire reporting gives an inaccurate picture of the school fire problem.

Fires reported by United States fire departments show that children under the age of 18 started 41,900 fires, causing an estimated 165 civilian deaths, 1,900 civilian injuries and \$272 million in direct property damage.

Two of the national sources of fire statistics, the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) agree on one point: **the crime of youth fire setting and juvenile arson accounts for over 50 percent of all intentionally set fires.**

For more information download the US Fire Administration report on School Fires – December 2004.

<http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/tfrs/v4i6.pdf>

Proclamation
National Arson Awareness Week 2005
School Arson – A Burning Subject

WHEREAS, the leading cause of school structure fires on average is incendiary/suspicious activity, which includes arson fires, and accounts for 37 percent of all school structure fires and 52 percent of middle and high school structure fires

WHEREAS, seventy-eight percent of school fires occur during the school week and 22 percent on weekends; fifty-five percent of fires occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., the hours students are most likely to be in school

WHEREAS, the increase in arson fires that cause fatalities is a troublesome statistic; many other fatal fires are preventable through increased outreach, supervision, and technological innovation.

WHEREAS, the price that America pays for fires set in schools is extreme, the crime of youth fire setting and juvenile arson accounts for over 50 percent of all intentionally set fires.

WHEREAS, public awareness is one of the specific responsibilities of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED, that the first full week of May shall be designated as National Arson Awareness Week. The theme of this year's Arson Awareness Week is "School Fires – A Burning Subject" and takes place from Sunday, May 1st through Saturday, May 7th 2005.

The first Proclamation of National Arson Awareness Week took place on May 4th 1996 by Action of the Board of Directors of the International Association of Arson Investigators, Inc. on November 1, 1985 in Atlanta, Georgia

Sample Resolution

WHEREAS, school fires is a serious crime that affects all people and can only be stopped when citizens realize the physical and emotional damage suffered by arson victims; and

WHEREAS, the leading cause of school structure fires on average is incendiary/suspicious activity, which includes arson fires, and accounts for 37 percent of all school structure fires and 52 percent of middle and high school structure fires;

WHEREAS, seventy-eight percent of school fires occur during the school week and 22 percent on weekends; fifty-five percent of fires occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., the hours students are most likely to be in school;

WHEREAS, the increase in arson fires that cause fatalities is a troublesome statistic; many other fatal fires are preventable through increased outreach, supervision, and technological innovation;

WHEREAS, the price that America pays for fires set in schools is extreme; the crime of youth fire setting and juvenile arson accounts for over 50 percent of all intentionally set fires;

WHEREAS, the support and promotion of National Arson Awareness Week will honor all that is best within humanity by focusing our collective efforts on a community solution;

NOW, THEREFORE, I [Governor's or Mayor's name], [Governor or Mayor] of [City or State], on behalf of its citizens do hereby proclaim May 1-7, 2005, to be Arson Awareness Week;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the [Governor's name or Mayor's name] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] pay special tribute to all fire and law enforcement investigative agencies for their dedicated and tireless service;

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, the [insert Governor's or Mayor's name] and [insert Cabinet or Council, etc.] of the [insert City or State] have hereunto subscribed their names and have caused the Official Seal of the [insert City and County or State] to be hereunto affixed in the

[City of State] of _____ on this _____ day of
_____ 2005.

_____ [Signature]

2005 ARSON AWARENESS WEEK – MAY 1-7TH

The theme for this year's Arson Awareness Week is "School Arson – A Burning Subject." The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI) sponsor Arson Awareness Week.

The leading cause of school structure fires on average is incendiary/suspicious activity, which includes arson fires, and accounts for 37 percent of all school structure fires and 52 percent of middle and high school structure fires.

The price that America pays for fires set in our schools is extreme. The crime of youth fire setting and juvenile arson accounts for over 50 percent of all intentionally set fires. In addition to the cost of the damaged property, there is the cost to the community of the increasing resources needed to fight the problem.

Fire in the hands of school children destroys – regardless of a child's age or motivation.

Fire in our schools is a burning subject. In addition to fire departments, communities must involve the police department, mental health professionals, school system, children's hospitals, social services and the media.

If people can become more informed about arson prevention, along with having intervention and treatment programs for these heinous acts of burning, strides can be made in this preventable malfeasance.

Seventy-eight percent of school fires occur during the school week and 22 percent on weekends. Fifty-five percent of fires occur between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., the hours students are most likely to be in school. Fatalities from school fires are rare, but injuries per fire were higher in school structure fires than non-residential structure fires on average.

The major goals of Arson Awareness Week are:

- To create a national recognition, awareness and understanding of the school fire problem in the United States.
- To encourage communities to get involved in the dissemination of arson awareness information by creating a simple, identifiable and unifying message for intervention and prevention.
- Organize local events that raise a community's awareness of school fires and arson issues.
- Engage national, regional and local media outlets in delivering the message.

USFA has designed a media kit which includes brochures, new press releases, arson statistics and supporting materials for area awareness events throughout the country. We are very optimistic about this year's campaign and think it will be one of the best to date.

For more information, contact the United States Fire Administration at 1.800.603.3100.